

The St. Lawrence County Historical Association

Quarterly

Volume XLIV- Number 2 - Summer 1999



The St. Lawrence County Historical Association at the Silas Wright House

The St. Lawrence County Historical Association is a private, not-for-profit, membership organization based at the Silas Wright House in Canton, New York. Founded in 1947, the Association is governed by a constitution, by-laws, and Board of Trustees. The Historical Association's membership meets annually to elect its officers and trustees.

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Our Mission

The St. Lawrence County Historical Association is a not-for-profit membership organization and museum which serves as an educational resource for the use and benefit of the citizens of St. Lawrence County and others interested in the County's history and traditions. The Association collects and preserves archival material and artifacts pertinent to the County's history. In cooperation and collaboration with other local organizations, the Association promotes an understanding of and appreciation for the County's rich history through publications, exhibits, and programs. The St. Lawrence County Historical Association operates within museum standards established by the American Association of Museums.

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Membership in the St. Lawrence County Historical Association is open to all interested parties. Annual membership dues are: Individual, \$25; Senior/Student, \$20; Family, \$35; Contributor, \$50; Supporter, \$100; Patron, \$250; Businesses, \$50 to \$1,000. Members receive the *SLCHA Quarterly*, the Historical Association's bi-monthly newsletter, and various discounts on publications, programs and events.

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The SLCHA Quarterly welcomes contributions. To submit a manuscript, or for further information, please contact the editor through the St. Lawrence County Historical Association. Please address communications to: Managing Editor, *The SLCHA Quarterly*, P.O. Box 8, Canton, NY 13617.

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Issue Editor:
Pamela Ouimet

Cover Illustration
A look at Main Street, Canton from the top of the Opera House in 1953.
Courtesy: SLCHA

From the Editor

Hello, I'm Pam Ouimet, the new editor of *The Quarterly*.

I am looking forward to working with the St. Lawrence County Historical Association's staff and volunteers alike, as well as with any of you who wish to submit articles to be used in *The Quarterly*. I would like you all to know that I will be more than happy to work with you on any submissions you would care to make for the upcoming editions. Photographs are always a welcome compliment to any article submitted, or as a stand-alone item if you have some news you want to share. You can be assured all photos will be returned to you after publication. Please feel free to send your entries along with your name, address and phone number to either the Association, or directly to me at: PO Box 48, West Stockholm, NY 13696.

To tell you a little about myself, I am originally from Massena and graduated with my BA in English/writing from SUNY Potsdam in 1988. I worked as a Reporter for the Daily Courier-Observer for nine years, and have been the Communications Coordinator for the North Country Reference and Research Resources Council – NorthNet since February of 1999.



V.44, no. 1

Building with Potsdam Red Sandstone, the early years --
By S. Omohundro

Author's Correction: The Alexander Brown house in Hermon was reported as "demolished." Although the house has been gutted, the primary walls are still standing.



Courtesy Massena Aluminum Historical Association

The Massena Aluminum Historical Association was recently recognized by the RCHA for establishing a museum for the Aluminum industry. Pictured (left to right); Patricia McGrath, Sue Longshore, Trent Trulock, and Santo Savoca.

Remembering the Town Hall

By Patricia Harrington Carson

I remember the old "Town Hall" with such fond memories. It stood stately and dignified and lent to Canton's Main Street and aura of opulence. And it gave a feeling of enchantment because it looked so much like a castle.

It was during a special meeting in the spring of 1877 that the first plans to build a new town meeting place were formed. Canton had by then been in existence for 70 years. To the villagers, this undertaking was an exciting and rousing venture.

A small, pastoral village located on the banks of the Grasse River, Canton was fast becoming a thriving community. People were drawn to its warmth

and friendliness, plus the business advantages offered were too good to be ignored.

On Main Street, the sidewalks were wooden planks and the road was dirt. What illumination there was came from gas lights. Depending on the weather, horse and carriages or horse drawn sleighs were the sole mode of transportation. In my mind's eye, I can see the carriages transversing the humpy roads, and the sleighs gliding through the snow in the dead of winter.

A number of farms surrounded the village. Farm land was plentiful and fertile. The needs of the farmer were one of the reasons our forefathers had

determined the time was right for the building of a new "Town Hall." Times and needs were very different back then.

There were several one room school houses scattered throughout the area and Canton's Union Free School was located on Court Street. The current town hall, which had been built in 1846, was close by, situated on the corner of Court and Pearl streets. It was a plain, substantial building that was often in need of repair.

A committee was formed to begin to formulate the plans for this greatly anticipated addition to Canton. One of the first decisions to be made was the location. The site, finally chosen, was



Canton Town Hall/Opera House

Courtesy SLCHA



The Ellsworth House

Courtesy SLCHA

on the corner of Main and Miner streets, with the Ellsworth house on one side and the Miner Inn on the other.

The Ellsworth house was a stately residence built of red brick. It was surrounded by a red sandstone wall and iron fence. On the opposite corner was a wonderfully quaint Victorian building known as the Miner Inn. It was originally built as an annex for guests from the Hodskin House, a large hotel a short distance away.

When completed in 1878, the new edifice was indeed magnificent. Made of gray sandstone it was both gracious and functional. The beautiful leaded glass windows added to the charm of the architecture, as did the turrets and the imposing tower housing the clock, which chimed the hour and the half hour in a clear resonant tone, and could clearly be heard throughout the village.

There were wide steps leading up from Main Street and there was a second entrance at

the base of the tower that afforded access to the auditorium, which was complete with stage and dressing rooms. The Town Hall was considered the finest structure in the North Country and was truly an ornament to the Village.

The auditorium was the utmost in elegance and Victorian design. The interior was walnut, or painted to look like walnut. The balcony had a wooden railing. It had 20 foot high cathedral windows, and a huge kerosene chandelier hung from the ceiling. It could seat 700 people.

No building in Canton is richer in memories than the old Town Hall, or the "Opera House" as it was more aptly called. From its opening, the upstairs auditorium became the center of Canton's good times. Road shows that traveled by railway played four or five nights during Fair Week, changing shows every night. There were many local plays and Gilbert & Sullivan operettas as well. Touring minstrel shows came for one night stands. Tickets ranged from 25 to 50 cents.

There were also shows by local performers known as the "Merry Monarch Minstrels."



Courtesy Pat Carson

Main Street, Canton

Made up in black face, they sang and danced the clog dances of the day. In March of 1901, one of their shows was cancelled as the greatest snowstorm in all of Canton's history paralyzed the North Country. Not even the actors could get to the theater that night.

The Opera House had a sloping floor and the six rows in front were reserved. Those who bought the highest priced orchestra seats were given movable straight back cane chairs, which they could move around to form a circle for conversing until the orchestra arrived to warm up. Henry Devalcourt Kip, a celebrated local artist, had painted the scenery.

On Saturday evenings the auditorium was converted into the Village's movie theater with Stanley Southworth as proprietor. He was an organizer who was original in his form of advertising. He would read ads from the Canton newspapers to the audience before the show began. Southworth would then walk down the aisle to the front of the theater to tell about next week's show.

It was in the Board of Trade rooms that the citizens of Canton met one evening in 1886 to save St. Lawrence University. Due to financial difficulties, the school was struggling to keep going. The now honored and traditional college hymn, "The Scarlet and the Brown," was written for the occasion by Charles Kelsey Gaines and was sung for the first time by the student body as they marched into the meeting. Directing the song, the march was led by Williston Manley, who was later editor of *The St. Lawrence Plaindealer*. It

is a matter of record that the people of Canton, along with the college students, subscribed \$3,500 for St. Lawrence University that evening, and the University was saved.

Graduation exercises took place at the Town Hall for St. Lawrence University, as well as the Agricultural School and Canton High School before they had their own auditoriums.

Long before Canton had a library, a reading room was opened in the Town Hall. As would be expected, there were community gatherings of many kinds held there. Some red-hot political battles took place there, as well as Senatorial and Judicial conventions. From the beginning, it was where all village and town voting took place. In the early days, the bell tower was used to sound Canton's fire alarms.



Courtesy Town/Village of Canton Historian
*Absalom Gaines takes a stroll down
Main Street, Canton*



Courtesy Town/Village of Canton Historian
Activity on Main Street, Canton

The Post Office and the Board of Trade rooms occupied the first floor. The Superintendent of the Poor also had an office there, as did the Town Clerk. The building was seventy feet by one hundred and ten feet with a basement for butter, milk and cheese storage, which was badly needed by the local farmers. There was also a residence for the janitor/custodian.

Many times over the years I have tried to imagine the glory and anticipation of the Opera House's opening night. What show was playing remains veiled in mystery, not named in any articles I have read. I can visualize the ladies and gentlemen, and children as well perhaps, strolling happily up the street, or alighting from their carriages on that memorable evening.

This was the era of formality in dress and manners. It was an age of elegance and refinement. I can see in my mind's eye the ladies' dresses of corded silk or satin; or likely the less affluent in homespun muslin. The men in their coats and ties, wearing spats perhaps and maybe straw boaters or derbies. How exciting the evening must have been and how beautiful the theater must have looked with all the lovely painted scenery and the large kerosene chandelier glowing above the heads of the crowd.

If only walls could talk, what stories they could have told in the over eighty years that the Town Hall graced our Main Street. What hidden secrets could it have revealed?

Think of all the people who left their mark there over the years. It was like a history book in itself. It spoke volumes about

a village and its people. A picture of progress, a picture of what our early society was like. A wonderfully unforgettable collection of memories. How sad that it is not still there to enrich our lives.

Sadly, that wonderful old Town Hall met its doom on February 2, 1962. A fire broke out at approximately 6:15 a.m., and within fifteen minutes it was totally engulfed in flames.

It was a great loss to so many... that beautiful building was gone. The memories will, however, remain forever.

So Much to Tell : A Place We Call Home -- Waddington, N.Y.

E. Jane Layo

(Taken from the Files of the Waddington Historian)

The vicinity of Waddington was first noticed by Count Frontenac, Governor General of Canada, in 1673, and again is mentioned in Father Charlevoix's diary written on his trip in 1721.

The town itself was not established until the passing of a bill by New York State on May 5, 1786, for the protection of this frontier from the English. The bill declared that "On the South-east side of the St. Lawrence River, will be sold at public vend, at the Coffee House in the City of New York. The fourth and eighth townships, will be sold by single lots..."

On September 10, 1787, Madrid was named and was the fourth township to be established out of the ten new towns, and Mr. Macomb, with his bidders bought this section of the country.

Waddington found itself as a part of Clinton and Herkimer counties before belonging to St. Lawrence County. In 1793, the land was sold to William Edgar and in the next year to William Constable. Shortly after, he sold Madrid to Abraham, David and Thomas Ogden and Josiah Hoffman for \$60,000.

But again the ownership was changed after the death of Abraham Ogden when Thomas and David Ogden sold a third of Madrid to Joshua Waddington in

April of 1803. By this time the land had been surveyed by Benjamin Wright and it was fully opened for sale.

The first white settlers were the Samuel Allens family, who founded a Dutch family homestead here.

Land began to be sold in 1798, when Barton Edsall and John Sharp were the first to invest, although at the time there were from twelve to fifteen residents. This was evident since there were this many in attendance at the Fourth of July celebration. (It is interesting to note that astonished Canadians sent a flag of truce because of the firing of guns and shouting all in honor of that day.)

The village now began to develop. It was located a few miles to the east of Ogdensburg on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River in the northeastern part of St. Lawrence County. The river, Brandy Brook, Big and Little Sucker Brooks and numerous gullies surrounded the level surfaced land consisting of sandy loam.

The lots along the riverfront were one-sixth of a mile wide and sold for \$2.50 an acre, while those back from the river a mile were sold in one mile squares at \$2.00 per acre. In 1800, there were eight purchases, while in the next three years there were only thirteen.

The settlers from New England, Vermont and Roxburghshire, Scotland, now began coming; this included the Rutherford brothers who settled in the southwest part of the village now known as the Scotch Settlement.

On April 1, 1808, a law was passed authorizing J. Waddington and D. and T. Ogden to build a canal and docks for the improvement of navigation. The project was to be constructed on the south channel (the Little River) of the St. Lawrence River, which was 1,000 feet wide, with an eight foot drop in fifty rods and flowed 24,000 cubic feet per second. The wooden locks, built by the St. Lawrence Lock Company were fifty feet by ten feet with a two foot draft. Before completion, however, the lock was undermined and abandoned.

Twice an act was passed to extend the time for completion, and finally a stone lock was built. This was of little use since the dimensions allowed only Durham boats to pass. The toll collected was twenty-five cents per ton on all boats over two tons, or fifty cents for smaller boats. At the same time, a drawbridge with three openings to the Island was built by D. Ogden.

The first post office for Waddington, under the name of Madrid, was established in Postmaster Alexander Richard's home on December 14, 1807.

The mail was first brought by horseback and since has been transported by water, stagecoach from Madrid, railroad, and on the Norwood Star Route.

The three-mile long Isle au Rapide Plat (Ogden Island) situated between the main channel of the St. Lawrence and Le Petite Sault (the Little Jump), or south channel, was the site for the mansion of D. Ogden which was begun in 1809. When the first settlers began obtaining land, this island was the scene of a few disputes. The first was with the St. Regis Indians, who had lived, hunted, fished and laid claim to this land. Land Agent Edsall forbade them to cut the valuable pine forest which they used for timber. In May 1803, representatives from both sides settled their differences by agreeing that Mr. Edsall could remove the already cut timber and sell it for sixty cents a tree so long as the title of the land was presented to Madrid. Sixteen years later, the question of whether England or the U.S. owned the Island was settled when the boundary between Canada and the U.S. was established north of the Island.

According to Spafford's Gazetteer of 1813, there was a site for an academy here, but nothing was ever erected. The first school established was about 1810 and within a few years a school at Sucker Brook (District 3) and Charlton (District 2) were started.

In 1811, a year after Hamilton was made a Port of Entry with Mathew Myers as Deputy Collector, Madrid was partially divided. David Ogden became owner of the village of Waddington, the dam, the water privileges, the mills, the Island,

the land of the riverbed and 1,135 acres of water frontage, which went a mile back away from the shore.

By now the War of 1812 had descended upon these shores. Since there had been a few small Indian raids, some people left never to return. Some did not bother to budge, and yet others left and returned after the War. There was a company of militia stationed here for a few months under the command of captains Bester Pierce and George Wells. While they were here, they were involved in a skirmish on the Island with a detachment of Britons, in which Jacob Redington was wounded. In 1813, the only Council of War in St. Lawrence County was held on October 8

near White House Creek, when generals Wilkinson, Boyd, Portec and Sturtout were to decide where to invade Canada. Except for these acts and many enlistments, Waddington has not been involved too deeply in any other wars.

Meanwhile, D. Ogden had settled the 750 acre island. By 1816, his house was completed with its three-foot walls, twelve fireplaces and part of his wife's dowry of slaves used for house servants and farm hands.

During Waddington's early period, the people felt the need for houses of worship. On February 13, 1812, Trinity Church of New York City passed a decree granting \$3,000 for the request



The Ogden House

Courtesy SLCHA



Courtesy SLCHA

St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Waddington

of D. Ogden for aid in building St. Paul's Episcopal Church. The only conditions for this were that a Glebe of 300 acres adjacent to the village for income and a lot for the church were to be given. When the walls and roof were intact, one half the sum was given and the rest was to come when it was completed. The balance was paid by D. Ogden. The church, started in 1816, was made of the same stone as the mansion and Ellerslie. The \$8,000 edifice of Georgian style is one of the finest examples of early church architecture in the North Country. On October 19, the parish was incorporated, and the first vestry was elected. It was for many years the center of the missionary work in the North Country, helping to establish parishes at Ogdensburg and Potsdam. (It is interesting to note that for 58 years the pews were sold annually, and for the past 106 years the present pipe organ has been in use.)

In 1825, the first Catholic Church in the County was established. Services in the log church on Franklin Road were held by the missionaries. Two years later Rev. Salmon came to render his

services. In 1848, a stone edifice was built under Rev. Mackey. It is much the same today, except for what was rebuilt after a fire in the interior.

The next church to be constructed was the Presbyterian Church, organized as the Congregational Society on January 12, 1828. Before this, services had been held as early as 1807. By October 5, 1841, the church was reorganized by the Rev. Lewis Weeks. An edifice was built in 1844 and dedicated on

January 6, 1849. On July 14, 1858, after the congregation chose to be connected with the Presbyterian Organization, they became part of the St. Lawrence Presbytery. After the church burned, a \$2,500 stone edifice was built and dedicated in 1889. Twice again fire has struck and each time it was restored.

Because of its magnificent water power supply and the lack of competition to destroy its small industries, Waddington was thriving through the 19th Century. The earliest recorded industry was a saw mill on the Big Sucker Brook owned by J. Waddington and A. Hamilton. Other saw mills were: one built by Richard Harrison and owned by John Rutherford, with a capacity of 2,400 feet a day; one on the Island belonging to Richard Harrison and later to E.S. Crapser; and that of Horace Montgomery with a capacity of one and one half million feet per year.

Sylvanus Pratt's trip hammer mill was important for the fact that the first scythe and axe made



Courtesy SLCHA

Presbyterian Church, Waddington

by machine in the United States were made here. This establishment burned.

About 1826, the first paper mill in the county was started by Thayer, Whitcomb and Wales, for the production of wrapping and writing paper from flax.

In 1831, George Redington started a lumber market to Montreal, Quebec, Albany, Troy and New York. About this same time, bad luck struck when the dam broke, destroying the lock. Within three years, Isaac Ogden, who took over after D. Ogden's death, had a new bridge built on stone piers, which filled the gap so the water could be controlled in the south channel with one opening left for the boats to pass. The dam was also repaired. When this was closed, the water stopped, allowing repairs to be made cheaply. The canal extended from the dam parallel to the river. These circumstances offered an unlimited supply of water for hydraulic purposes.

From 1834-40, the Ogdens operated a quarter furnace to produce pig iron and casting. The furnace was twenty-six feet square, twenty-eight feet on the outside and had a diameter of six feet by ten inches on the inside. Bog ore found in the swamp near the Grasse River was used, costing \$3.00 per ton to be delivered at the furnace. This price contributed to its failure.

The last church to be constructed in the village was the Methodist Society formed in 1847, as part of the Lisbon-Louisville circuit until 1849. After a committee was formed to get a loan, a brick church was started and dedicated in November 1854, by Rev. A. A. Fackerell.

The circuit consisted of three classes (the Village, Charlton, Putney). After the church was rebuilt in 1892, fire struck two times, each time it was rebuilt and rededicated.

Nathaniel Taggart built a stone grist mill for Howland and Aspinwall of New York to be leased to J. V. C. and H. S. Northrup. After sixteen years, it was sold to L. J. Proctor and improved by an added roller machine. The only other mill of this type was built in 1855.

After fifty-seven years of traveling nine miles in alternate years from Waddington and Columbia Village (Madrid) for town meeting, and after twenty years of being an incorporated village (since April 26, 1839), Waddington's people decided on November 2, 1859, that the towns should be divided. The division was as follows: the northwest portion of the organized No. 4 of Madrid and Ogden Island was to be the twenty-ninth town erected in the County and called Waddington, and the southeast portion was to be called Madrid. Complete organization came in March, 1860.

In 1859, a graduate school of four departments was organized in a two-story building. At this time there were 314 pupils in the district, with a daily attendance of 200. In 1866, the school became a Union Free District with a Board of Education consisting of three members. By the end of the Century, the system had fourteen districts.

Now the Civil War was passing over the Country. One of Waddington's most famous individuals was Major J. T. Rutherford, a descendant of Thomas

Rutherford. This gallant man served in the Ninth New York Cavalry and rose from private in 1861, to lieutenant because of his gallantry in the Second Battle of Bull Run and his conduct at Berryville. He held the position of first lieutenant until 1864, when he was promoted to captain.

He also participated in the battles of Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Mechanicsville, Kilpatric's Raid, Cold Harbor, the Battle of the Wilderness, and Sheridan's Campaign. This man, a member of the Legion of Honor, received many medals and in later life served his community.

A stone tannery was built by Judge Jason Fenton, and about 1875 was bought by Peter Dalton, turning out 2,800 hides per year until its burning. The trip hammer mill built before 1812, was transformed by Benjamin Bentley to a foundry in 1840, and operated until it burned in 1874; it was rebuilt and owned by Mayette and Allison to produce plows, stoves, and small castings.

The main paper mill was that which Henry James bought as a flour mill with water and power rights and changed to a paper mill after 1876. This mill employed about twenty-eight people who turned out 3,000 to 4,000 pounds of paper a day for a newspaper.

The Town Hall, with its wide massive steps, has an antique appearance. This was constructed for \$15,500, in 1884 by Isaac Johnson, a former slave. He and William Akin designed the forty-five by ninety foot building with a twenty-foot au-

ditorium, sixty-foot tower, and nine-foot high basement. This hall has been used for just about all occasions, including: an opera house, dance hall, basketball court, dining room, roller skating rink, auctions, bazaars, rummage sales, and ice cream social. The basement provides the town and village offices.

Late in the 19th Century, Waddington's prosperity began to decline due to improved transportation facilities to other parts of the County, State, etc. The Whitcher Boom Plan was started about 1894, with the purpose of connecting the Village with Canada to help build up the business again. Another plan was to start a stock company with a large amount of capital to secure enough land to build a city, to erect factories, and to generate electricity throughout the County. Both of these plans failed. At this time, Waddington's only newspaper, called the *Waddington Recorder*, was started on April 19 by George Logan. This continued for a few years.

In 1902, the St. Regis Paper Company built a dock, and in 1909, the Norwood and St. Lawrence Railroad came for the purpose of carrying the pulpwood to Norfolk and Raymondville and to transport manufactured milk products. Waddington now became the most easterly port in the U.S. for Canadian pulpwood.

Shortly thereafter, the Hamilton Dairy came into existence and by 1917 was swallowed up by the Waddington Condensed Milk Company, Inc. It contained a 100 by thirty-foot icehouse. There were four receiving stations in the U.S. for milk and eleven in Canada for cream.

Because of the 200,000 pounds of milk capacity per day, the average employment was forty people, who were needed for the production of condensed, evaporated, sterilized, and powdered milk, and cream. The conveniences brought Runkles Bros., a cocoa and chocolate plant for the purpose of manufacturing chocolate candy mix and milk powder.

In 1919, the \$20,000 brick library was built as a gift of A.

Barton Hepburn. The first floor is the Library, incorporated in 1921. The next year, \$300 was received from the 1909 Old Home Week for books.

The bank, organized in 1919, was started by the citizens of Waddington, who bought stock. In 1927, a bank was built of brick with Indiana limestone trimming for \$45,290. The building was twenty-eight by sixty feet.



FIRST TRAIN INTO WADDINGTON N.Y.

JUNE 27, 1909

Courtesy SLCHA

First train into Waddington



Unloading Boatload of Pulpwood Waddington, N.Y.

Boat of pulpwood

Courtesy SLCHA

In February 1930, a \$112,972 building of natural colored brick was opened. It is located on the corner of Public Square and the Athletic Field. A sixty-five by forty-foot gym, a stage and side seats are situated in the basement.

The year before this, the Federal government had authorized a bill for the upstream end of the pulp dock to be widened and deepened. In 1944, New York State's Legislature finally passed a bill for the development of the St. Lawrence River Power Project and on May 6, 1954, the Wiley Dondero Act was passed, officially starting the huge project.

This changed the Village greatly. Actual work in the Village began in 1955, when two dikes were built so the Little River could be dewatered, widened, and deepened. By 1957, this section was dry and two years later the water was raised to flood creeks, inlets, former farms and places of business.

During this time other changes had taken place. All businesses on St. Lawrence Avenue were taken over by the Power Authority and demolished. Homes were moved to new locations, rebuilt or raised. The main industry, the Milk Company, was closed and accidentally burned on March 29, 1958.

These losses were justified by the fact that through careful planning the whole Village had not been fated to be moved like others, because of its high elevation. It was found that the new Lake St. Lawrence would not cover very much of the town.

The advantages and gains were also great. These included: the relocation of Route 37 from St. Lawrence Avenue to Lincoln Avenue, additional bridges, a sewage plant, a water supply plant with pumping stations and new water lines, a quarter of a mile park with such facilities as parking lots, two tennis courts, and two basketball courts, boat launching facilities, benches, a softball and football field, paved walks, new sidewalks on St. Lawrence Avenue, a beach, an improved pulp dock, and an artesian well.

As a highlight to the events of Waddington's past history and the conclusion of the Seaway and Power Project in 1959, a celebration was enjoyed for four days. It celebrated 100 years of being a separate town and 120 as an incorporated village.

After six years of split day sessions, a new \$1,540,000 Junior/Senior High School plus an addition to the Waddington Elementary School was opened in 1962. Previously, the Madrid-Waddington Central School had been formed on June 30, 1956, by joining Madrid Central School to the Waddington Union Free High School.

The newest improvement is that of the Post Office now located in the Reynolds Block. Before the fifty-five years which the office spent in the McKee Block on the west side of Main Street, it was in the homes, offices or stores of the post masters. As time went on, the accommodations became too crowded, mainly because of the new families brought here by the Seaway. On April 1, 1956, the

double floor space and 200 new boxes were added. Shortly hereafter, its status changed from third class to second class. But quarters were still found inadequate, so in answer to a request to Senator Keating and Congressman Kilburn, better facilities were acquired, causing a transfer on February 1, 1963.

In conclusion, I believe we could say Waddington is an interesting as well as an important place. In its early years it was a very prosperous center of industry. The Seaway, even though it has destroyed the historical, picturesque appearance of the Village, has modernized and greatly improved it. Since we have looked into its history, it is easier to appreciate this beautiful little village on the shore of the blue Lake St. Lawrence.

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AUTHOR'S NOTES

Macomb's bidders were Michael Connely, John Myers, Daniel McCormick, John Taylor, and Jeremiah Van Rensselaer.

1800 purchases were to John Tuttle, Benjamin Bartlett, Godfrey Meyers, Benjamin Campbell, Silas Dimick, Reuben Fields, Asa Freeman, Samuel Allen, Edward Lawrence, Asa and John Fenton, Alexandria Brush, Jacob Carners, Allen Patterson, Jacob Redington, Robert Sample, Caleb and Cornelius Peck, Henry Allen, William Osburne, Ira Paine, Oliver Linsley, Joseph Orcutt, Henry and Joseph Erwin, John Montgomery.

1801 were Isaac Barthownew, Simon Lindsley

1802 were Allen Barber, Nathaniel Smith, Aaron Scott, Martin Rosenburg, John Allen, George, Thomas, Walter and Richard Rutherford

1803 was Samuel Chipman

Ellerslie was the mansion of Gouverneur Ogden at Waddington.

Other businesses in the late 1800s included oatmeal mill, shingle mill, woolen factory, Model Mill of Bowhall and Rutherford, flour mills, planing mill, sash and blind factory, butter factory, flax mill, asheries, tin, woolen, carding, machine, cabinet, wagon, blacksmith, harness, marble and copper, brick shops, general, drug, grocery, shoe, milleneries, agricultural, flour, feed, hardware, boat, furniture and meat stores, a watchmaker, a photographer, and an experiment of manufacturing water lime produced from stone drift formations on the island; also three hotels.

The St. Lawrence River and Waddington

By E. Jane Layo,
Waddington Historian

Waddington today is a town of contrast—modern in facilities but with the charm of another age. The influence of the St. Lawrence River on the development of Waddington is just as real today as it was in the early settlement of this town.

Passing by the front door of the town is the majestic St. Lawrence River. "It lies for a thousand miles between two great nations, yet neglected by both, though neither would be so great without it—a river as grand as the La Plata, as picturesque as the Rhine, as pure as the Lakes of Switzerland ... The noblest, the purest, most enchanting river on all God's beautiful earth ... has never yet had a respectable history, nor scarcely more than an occasional artist to delineate its beauties." (Quote from the book entitled *The St. Lawrence River*.)

James Ricalton was born and brought up in Waddington, an explorer, hunter, war correspondent and globetrotter. It is said that he traveled all over the world and never had found a body of water so beautiful as the St. Lawrence. Mr. Ricalton in thirty odd years traveled about 500,000 miles, visited every land except the North and South poles, covered every war in his time as correspondent, and photographed about 100,000 pictures. Today the lure of the St. Lawrence brings back many former residents - they retire to this place they call home.

It was on the second voyage of Jacques Cartier (1534-1536) when he named the small harbor on the Labrador coast The Bay of St. Lawrence (Saint Laurens), and it is the first appearance of this name which was later to be applied to the gulf, lake and river. As he boldly passed through the open gates that led to the new world (now Canada and the United States), he asked "What river is this?" One of the two natives that were serving on this voyage answered that this is "A river without end."

Due to illness, lack of food and the harsh winters of the northeast, Cartier and his crew returned to France. The Norsemen continued to travel this area to hunt and fish. As more and more settlers came to

the area, the fur trading along the river turned to commerce. There were obstacles along this river that over the years have been harnessed to what it is today.

A two mile stretch of the St. Lawrence between Waddington and Ogden Island was known as Little River. Along this course, the water fell eight or nine feet within a few rods, the same drop which in the north channel extended for about three miles to form the Rapide Plat. The south channel, with its short carry, was the favorite route for the French voyageurs and was the traditional route for the Indians in their passage up or down the river. The water, above and below the cascade, flowed over the limestone riverbed, making an ideal fishing area. Black bass, northern



Courtesy SLCHA

Ogden Island in Waddington, surrounded by the St. Lawrence River

pike, muskellunge and walleyed pike had always been plentiful in Little River. The brooks, which empty in the river at Waddington, were a natural spawning ground for walleyed Pike. The spring run would find the fishermen waiting.

The beauty of the falls and the possibilities for water power drew white settlers here as early as 1793, and by 1803 they were being supplied with lumber from a saw mill powered by water through a raceway. Visions of an industrial empire on this water power center were what enticed the early entrepreneurs to settle and invest here.

At this time, Waddington appeared to have a great potential for success of industry and trade. One of the first tasks was to build a dam to produce power, and a canal and a lock to allow the boats to bypass the turbulent Rapide Plat.

An early settler of this town, Captain John W. Hatch, built his home on the river in 1893. Touring the home today, one would surmise that Captain John was of considerable wealth. Docks were built on this jut of land that extended far into Little River above the drawbridge and dam. From there he eventually owned four boats; i.e. the SS Mary, the Adrian Islim, The Ike and the Cresco. The wood for construction of the home was shipped to this location. The boats carried cargo and passengers and were the major transportation carriers during that period of our history. Three of these boats burned and sank at the dock one night when the SS Mary blew up in 1906.

Industry centered along the dam and power canal. Raw ma-



Courtesy SLCHA

The Waddington Community, a hub of activity

terials to be processed at the mills and shops were brought in by the farmers of the surrounding area who had their grain ground into flour or grist, wood made into cloth or yarn, and logs made into lumber or finished woodwork. Hides were made into leather from which itinerant cobblers could make boots and shoes. Flax was processed for the home spinner. Many of these products brought a cash income to the farmer. Waddington prospered and grew as a result of its location on the St. Lawrence.

The channel on the U.S. side of the St. Lawrence had currents that hit the point near Coles Creek in Waddington at a very swift rate of speed. The water off the point about ten feet out went into "deep blue." At this point, 'Ellen's Eddy,' which flowed upstream, hit the current. There were also three large boulders in a group and another much larger just a few yards out. Apparently all of these caused three big whirlpools to whirl continuously with quite an audible roar, and never froze over in the winter.

When the river became part of the new lake these all disappeared.

Owners of the property along the water had shore rights before the Seaway/Power Project. They could build their own docks and boathouses and the land was considered their private property. The scenic views from the highway were enjoyed; the tall spires of the churches in Morrisburg, Ontario, Canada could be seen across this river; and the "little lakers" that passed through the Canadian canals and locks that were part of our past all centered around the river.

The ferry to Morrisburg, which from about 1926 to about 1950 operated from Dry Island, linked Canada and the United States in a way now difficult to understand. Many local residents made trips to Morrisburg for needed items which were not available in Waddington. Small children knew the currents along the river and learned to row their boats to Morrisburg. Many took up the challenge to swim across

the river. Many good times were had with the Canadian neighbors skating in their ice arena, attending movies and shows, competing in sports, and in many other ways. Sometimes residents would just go on the ferry for the ride, idle up along the canal, buy an ice cream cone and return to sit on one of the benches along the lock and watch the ships sail through.

In 1954, the Canadian and U.S. governments passed legislation to start the construction of the Seaway/Power Project that would bring a new prosperity to the region. Times were changing from the family farm to the exciting tourist's paradise as it was advertised. Again this new prosperity was centered around the St. Lawrence River, or Lake St. Lawrence as it came to be called.

How did it affect Waddington? You will see it was the most impacted community on the U.S. side of the Seaway/Power Project. The drawbridge that connected the mainland with Ogden Island was removed and dredging was undertaken in Little River. The first lock on the U.S. side of the St. Lawrence was removed, as was the dam at the end of Main Street. Our own power company; the major employer, the farming (milk) industry; and the historic landmark, the Ogden Mansion (or Island Mansion as it was called), were devastated by the construction of this project.

People in the community coped with the dirt and the influx of people, who were all looking for better times for their families. When the dust cleared, the community settled back into the days of yore but lacking were

the industry, farms and local businesses that made this a thriving community. The influx of people who left to go to the next major project somewhere else and the local residents were left to try to pick up the pieces. The tourists' paradise did not materialize.

The river that was and is so influential on the inhabitants of Waddington still flows past its doors but there is something different about that river. There is no privately owned property on the banks of the river, the Ogden Island that is a historic site lays dormant except for the few cattle grazing on the land over the summer months, and there is no industry dependent upon the water from the river. The industrial buildings have been torn down along with the street where they were based and the dam where they were located. Even the local school has been closed in favor of a more modern campus in Madrid some eight miles away.

There is a diminishing number of fishermen due to the damage to spawning beds by the uncertain water levels caused by the Seaway/Power Project and the non-native species planted here. Recreational boating is a growing industry in the area, but lack of suitable employment for the next generation has taken its toll on the growth expected. There are few family farms left, and some of the ones left have bought out other neighboring farms to enlarge their herd and prosper. These farms are being threatened by the stringent regulations brought about by the large herds and the fertilizers used in modern farming. A balance in the economic recovery and the environmental protection are a must for survival.

The mighty St. Lawrence River flows along its path, ignoring what is happening. When the winds push the river upstream, when the whitecaps appear, when the fogs clog the view and the ice forms during the winter, Mother Nature has taken over and these natural happenings cannot be tamed. It still has its magical power over all who visit or live along its banks. There is the draw of the fisherman and the smaller children to try their hand at fishing in a lake. When the first ice leaves the banks, the boat launch is busy with the influx of small fishing boats. In the summertime, when the temperature of the water would be chilling to most, there is a flurry of activity for those who know and respect this river. A few challenge the water to water ski or ride on the floats behind the speed boats.

On the north side of the river, behind Ogden Island, the large ocean-going vessels (also known as salties), and the lakers make their way to the middle of the Country to bring back grain, iron ore, and other products. Ships from all over the world transit past this town and yet this community retains the charm of older days - neighbor knowing neighbor - a community of values and always the St. Lawrence River, or Lake St. Lawrence, as it is referred to now.

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Local Municipal Historians in St. Lawrence County, New York

Town, village, and city historians for St. Lawrence County, New York are listed below in alphabetical order by locality. In some cases, historians fulfill the duties for more than one locality, and are thus listed more than once. In communities that have assistant or deputy historians, those individuals are listed second and their name is in parentheses. Please note that the area code for phone numbers listed below is 315, unless otherwise noted. For more information, contact the St. Lawrence County Historical Association.

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Clifton, Town of

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347-3554

Depeyster, Town of

Gloria Kimmel
(Adelaide Steele, Dpty.)
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(Laverne Freeman, Dpty.)
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Gouverneur, Town of

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Norfolk, Town of
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Norwood, Village of
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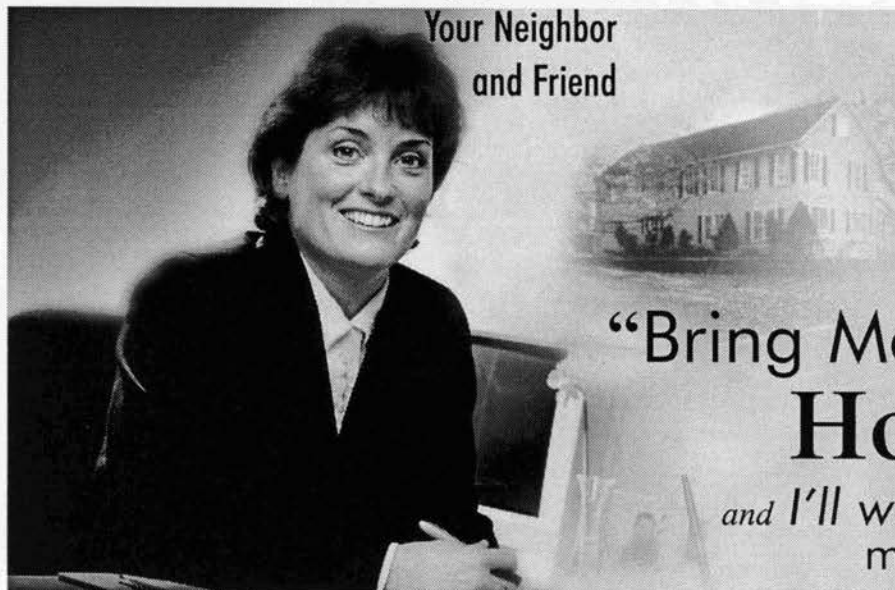
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